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**From:** Thiede, Kurt [thiede.kurt@epa.gov]  
**Sent:** 12/1/2020 5:42:55 PM  
**To:** Harris, Michael [harris.michael@epa.gov]; Newton, Cheryl [Newton.Cheryl@epa.gov]  
**CC:** Liebau, Joseph [Liebau.Joseph@epa.gov]  
**Subject:** FW: Region 5: Press Inquiry from Chicago Tribune NW Ind. Bureau (Post Tribune) DDL 12pm CT  
**Attachments:** Chicago Tribune Response 12-1- Draft.docx

I hadn't seen this article previously. Disgraceful. I continue to wonder about impartiality of a federal staff person who chooses to spread such baseless vitriol...regardless of the hat they may claim to wear.

I wanted you to be aware of Susan's response. Keep up the great Mike...your team has much to be proud of.

Kurt

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**From:** Bodine, Susan <bodine.susan@epa.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 1, 2020 10:44 AM  
**To:** Thiede, Kurt <thiede.kurt@epa.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: Region 5: Press Inquiry from Chicago Tribune NW Ind. Bureau (Post Tribune) DDL 12pm CT

FYSA,

Attached is a draft letter to the editor. I asked George Hull to share it with your comms people.

On Nov 27, 2020, at 4:46 PM, Block, Molly <[block.molly@epa.gov](mailto:block.molly@epa.gov)> wrote:

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/ct-ptb-env-biden-epa-region-5-st-1129-20201127-ks5pl5arevehplsxxkfxqdgoc-story.html>

## Trump critics say EPA should have more inspections, enforcement under Biden

By MEREDITH COLIAS-PETE

POST-TRIBUNE |

NOV 27, 2020 AT 1:22 PM

Trump administration critics are hoping President-elect Joe Biden will reverse several environmental rollbacks they say have left communities less protected from polluters.

During four years, the Trump administration has often sided with industry, while reversing more than 100 federal environment rules that included regulations over clean air, water and toxic cleanups.

Critics said they hope Biden would shift focus on clean energy, clean air, ozone standards, climate change, tightening anti-pollution rules and beefing enforcement.

Under Trump, enforcement was “severely weakened” both due to policies as well as funding cuts, while U.S. Justice Department lawyers typically took an anti-regulation stance in court, said Chicago-based Environmental Law and Policy Center Executive Director Howard Learner.

“I think you will see the Biden-Harris administration put ‘protection’ back into the Environmental Protection Agency,” he said.

Elsewhere, rejoining the Paris Climate Accord would be a notable step, he said. Biden has also supported the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, an EPA program working to protect the ecosystem and watershed. The Trump administration slashed 97% of funding in prior federal budget proposals.

Learner said his nonprofit has filed around 20 lawsuits against the Trump administration for environmental enforcement including two pending in Northwest Indiana involving ArcelorMittal and BP.

Places like Gary and East Chicago, considered environmental justice communities, could see a renewed focus for “cleaning up that area, so that the communities are not disproportionately impacted by toxic pollution,” said Nicole Cantello, president of the American Federation of Government Employees Local 704, representing just under 1,000 Midwest EPA employees.

Under Obama, federal environment prosecutions declined, a trend partly blamed on bigger, more complex investigations and fewer EPA staff.

Under Trump, the EPA's Region 5 Chicago office, which oversees the Midwest including Indiana, cut staff, while inspections declined 60%, compared to 30% elsewhere, according to a 2019 analysis by Illinois-based media Better Government Association.

"It was abysmal," Cantello said, of Trump's enforcement record.

Inspections, penalties, injunctive relief (orders polluters have to obey in the future) all declined, she said. By contrast, Biden could look to boost staff and send more inspectors out in the field.

"Right now, the enforcement that you are doing is only as good as what management orders are being given to the staff," she said.

In March, Susan Bodine, a top EPA compliance official, sent an "absolutely unprecedented" memo, loosening requirements for industry during COVID-19, Cantello said. The temporary order officially ended Aug. 31.

"It's important for folks to understand they do need to hold the Biden administration to its promises," Cantello said. "Everyone needs to keep their eyes on. That can't be stressed enough."

An EPA spokeswoman disputed Trump's record.

"The Trump EPA has recovered more criminal and civil penalties for enforcement in our first term than the Obama-Biden Administration did in their first term and is on track to double that amount," EPA spokeswoman Molly Block said in an email. "That includes strong enforcement in Region 5."

During the pandemic, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management was also criticized for allowing exceptions for looser enforcement. Both agencies said it was partly to protect their staff.

The EPA should retake a bigger role after shifting some enforcement to state agencies, said Meleah Geertsma, a Chicago-based National Resources Defense Council staff lawyer.

“They are underfunded, they are understaffed, they are not particularly proactive,” she said of state agencies. “We need the government to be there. Both ensuring the states are doing their job, being there to enforce the law and enforce the regulations.”

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**From:** Block, Molly  
**Sent:** Friday, November 27, 2020 12:41 PM  
**To:** Bodine, Susan <[bodine.susan@epa.gov](mailto:bodine.susan@epa.gov)>; Irving, John <[Irving.John@epa.gov](mailto:Irving.John@epa.gov)>; Hull, George <[Hull.George@epa.gov](mailto:Hull.George@epa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Hewitt, James <[Hewitt.James@epa.gov](mailto:Hewitt.James@epa.gov)>; Tran, Victoria <[tran.victoria@epa.gov](mailto:tran.victoria@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Region 5: Press Inquiry from Chicago Tribune NW Ind. Bureau (Post Tribune) DDL 12pm CT

Thank you! Will update.

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**From:** Bodine, Susan <[bodine.susan@epa.gov](mailto:bodine.susan@epa.gov)>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 27, 2020 12:39 PM  
**To:** Block, Molly <[block.molly@epa.gov](mailto:block.molly@epa.gov)>; Irving, John <[Irving.John@epa.gov](mailto:Irving.John@epa.gov)>; Hull, George <[Hull.George@epa.gov](mailto:Hull.George@epa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Hewitt, James <[hewitt.james@epa.gov](mailto:hewitt.james@epa.gov)>; Tran, Victoria <[tran.victoria@epa.gov](mailto:tran.victoria@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Region 5: Press Inquiry from Chicago Tribune NW Ind. Bureau (Post Tribune) DDL 12pm CT

Superfund cleanup commitments are not penalties. The question is about R5 and Biden. Can start with the penalty statement and pivot to R5.

## Ex. 5 Deliberative Process (DP)

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**From:** Grantham, Nancy <[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov](mailto:Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov)>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 27, 2020 10:36 AM  
**To:** Linduska, Rachel <[Linduska.Rachel@epa.gov](mailto:Linduska.Rachel@epa.gov)>; regionalpress <[regionalpress@epa.gov](mailto:regionalpress@epa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Press <[Press@epa.gov](mailto:Press@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Region 5: Press Inquiry from Chicago Tribune NW Ind. Bureau (Post Tribune) DDL 12pm CT

Looping the press box – assume that James/Molly will handle thanks ng

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**From:** Linduska, Rachel <[Linduska.Rachel@epa.gov](mailto:Linduska.Rachel@epa.gov)>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 27, 2020 10:35 AM  
**To:** regionalpress <[regionalpress@epa.gov](mailto:regionalpress@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Region 5: Press Inquiry from Chicago Tribune NW Ind. Bureau (Post Tribune) DDL 12pm CT

Please see the inquiry below, how should we handle or will HQ handle?

Rachel Bassler  
Public Affairs Officer  
[Linduska.Rachel@epa.gov](mailto:Linduska.Rachel@epa.gov)

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**From:** Colias, Meredith Elaine <[mcolias@post-trib.com](mailto:mcolias@post-trib.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, November 27, 2020 8:48 AM  
**To:** Arcaute, Francisco <[Arcaute.Francisco@epa.gov](mailto:Arcaute.Francisco@epa.gov)>  
**Cc:** Lippert, Allison <[lippert.allison@epa.gov](mailto:lippert.allison@epa.gov)>; Singer, Joshua <[Singer.Joshua@epa.gov](mailto:Singer.Joshua@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Question - Post-Tribune

Hi,

This weekend -

I'm writing an article where Trump critics said they are hoping for more enforcement and regulation out of EPA Region 5, citing staff cuts and dropping enforcement.

What direction do you see, particularly in enforcement, from Region 5 under a Biden administration?

Shorter deadline today - noon

Thanks,  
Meredith Colias-Pete  
Post-Tribune reporter

**Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)**

Twitter: @meredithcolias